

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-12 (Cancelled).

Claim 13 (Currently Amended): An insertion sleeve assembly comprising an insertion instrument for performing a medical operation and a sleeve of bio-absorbable material defining an interior for guiding said instrument, said sleeve having an opening and comprising a stop adjacent the opening, said sleeve being made of a material that is relatively rigid outside the body and becomes softer after introduction into the body and collapses ~~onto itself~~ inwardly when the instrument is withdrawn,

wherein said stop is configured to abut against an area of patient's skin surrounding an insertion site so as to prevent skin contamination.

Claim 14 (Previously Presented): The insertion sleeve assembly according to claim 13, wherein said sleeve is made of a material that is relatively rigid at temperatures below 30°C and not in contact with water.

Claim 15 (Previously Presented): The insertion sleeve assembly according to claim 13, wherein said material comprises a material from the group comprising: polyglycolide; poly-ε-caprolactone-DL-lactide copolymer; ε-caprolactone; D-lactide; L-lactide; DL-lactide and poly(DL-lactide-co-glycolide).

Claim 16 (Previously Presented): The insertion sleeve assembly according to claim 13, wherein said material comprises a combination of polyglycolide (30 - 50% by wt), polylactic acid (25 - 50% by wt) and caprolactone (4 - 25 % by wt).

Response Under 37 CFR 1.116
Expedited Procedure
Examining Group 3736
Application No. 10/557,286
Paper Dated: July 13, 2009
In Reply to USPTO Correspondence of March 13, 2009
Attorney Docket No. 0470-053534

Claim 17 (Previously Presented): The insertion sleeve assembly according to claim 13, wherein said sleeve has blood-staunching properties on the outside.

Claim 18 (Currently Amended): The insertion sleeve assembly according to claim 13, wherein said sleeve is provided with at least two break points, the minimal distance from the distal break point to the distal end being 15mm and the distance between said break ~~locations~~ points being less than 20 mm.

Claim 19 (Currently Amended): An insertion sleeve assembly comprising an insertion instrument for performing a medical operation and a sleeve of bio-absorbable material guiding said instrument, said sleeve being made of a material that is relatively rigid outside the body and becomes softer after introduction into the body and collapses ~~onto itself~~ inwardly when the instrument is withdrawn, wherein said sleeve has at least five break locations, the minimal distance from the distal break location to the distal end being 15 mm and the distance between said break locations being less than 20 mm.

Claim 20 (Previously Presented): The insertion sleeve assembly according to claim 18, wherein said sleeve is designed for direct contact with said insertion instrument and the body.

Claim 21 (Currently Amended): ~~The insertion sleeve assembly according to claim 20;~~ An insertion sleeve assembly comprising an insertion instrument for performing a medical operation and a sleeve of bio-absorbable material defining an interior for guiding said instrument, said sleeve having an opening and comprising a stop adjacent the opening, said sleeve being made of a material that is relatively rigid outside the body and becomes softer after introduction into the body and collapses inwardly when the instrument is withdrawn,

wherein said sleeve is provided with at least two break points, the minimal distance from the distal break point to the distal end being 15 mm,

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wherein said sleeve is designed for direct contact with said insertion instrument and the body, and

wherein the distance between said break ~~locations~~ points is 3 - 7 mm.

Claim 22 (Currently Amended): The insertion sleeve assembly according to claim 18, wherein said sleeve comprises a continuous base sleeve of flexible material and a number of rings arranged around ~~[[it]]~~ the continuous base sleeve.

Claim 23 (Previously Presented): The insertion sleeve assembly according to claim 22, wherein said sleeve has a wall thickness of 0.5 - 1.5 mm.

Claim 24 (Previously Presented): The insertion sleeve assembly according to claim 22, wherein said sleeve is made of a blood-staunching material.

Claim 25 (Currently Amended): The insertion sleeve assembly according to claim 13, wherein the sleeve is made of a bio-absorbable material ~~in its entirety~~.